

MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

October 28, 2011

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

Table of Contents

Action Items.....	1
1. Welcome and Introductions	1
2. Update on Response to Questions by Regional Office.....	2
3. Debrief of Dinkey North and South Field Visit	4
A. Identification of Potential Fisher Habitat	4
B. Monitoring Matrix and Summary Document	4
C. Landing Sites	5
D. Trees Removed by Objection	5
E. Regeneration Patches	5
F. Identification of Ladder Fuels and Marking Guidelines	5
4. Review of Proposed 2012 Work Plan.....	6
5. Discuss Draft Monitoring Matrix and Revised Monitoring Coordinator Proposal	7
6. Draft Promotional Materials and Discuss Finance Work Group Plans	8
7. Review of Annual Report Outline.....	8
8. Informational Updates: Snowy Patterson, Soaproot, and Eastfork Project Status and Upcoming Dates.....	9
9. Action Items	9
10. Attendees	10

Action Items

1. **DORIAN – ASAP** Circulate draft questions to biomass panelists.
2. **CRAIG THOMAS – ASAP** Invite Tad Mason to attend the December 1 biomass panel.
3. **DORIAN – ASAP** Follow-up on invitations to the Air Quality Management District and Air Pollution Control District for the December 1 biomass panel.
4. **DORIAN – ASAP** Share Craig Thomas’ email regarding the Dinkey budget.
5. **MOSÉ – ASAP** Initiate Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4 FRI) discussion to learn more about their planning and contracting approach.
6. **DORIAN – ASAP** Develop promotional brochure for Finance Work Group trip to Washington, D.C.
7. **ALL MEMBERS by November 3** – submit their collaboration hours to Mosé, using the spreadsheet provided.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin, Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project (DLRP) Project Manager for the Sierra National Forest (SNF), welcomed the participants to the full Collaborative meeting and reviewed the agenda, noting that the Honorable Robert Marquez was unable to attend.

2. Update on Response to Questions by Regional Office

Mosé Jones-Yellin, DLRP Project Manager, shared the latest information regarding questions posed to the Regional Office in August. The topics included:

1. Biomass utilization

- a. Mosé has arranged to have three specialists on biomass utilization from the Regional Office to come to the December 1 meeting, and contacted specialist Elissa Brown to share the feasibility study regarding a biomass plant in Northfork; Mosé will post the study to DataBasin. Mr. Dorian Fougères, facilitator, added that Collaborative member John Mount is presenting on the topic to the Society of American Foresters, and will join the December 1 panel, and that he would work with panelists to structure the session.
 - i. **ACTION ITEM: DORIAN – ASAP** Circulate draft questions to biomass panelists.
- b. Mr. Steve Haze commented that they should contact more individuals to participate in the Biomass Panel, such as Mr. Tad Mason. Mr. Mason co-authored the biomass feasibility study for the Northfork area, and the study is being analyzed for application to the Southern Sierras. Mr. Craig Thomas agreed to will invite Tad to physically attend the meeting or participate in a conference call.
 - i. **ACTION ITEM: CRAIG THOMAS – ASAP** Invite Tad Mason to attend the December 1 biomass panel.
 - ii. **ACTION ITEM: DORIAN – ASAP** Follow-up on invitations to the Air Quality Management District and Air Pollution Control District for the December 1 biomass panel.
- c. Ms. Carolyn Ballard and Mr. Haze suggested also inviting the Air Pollution Control District (APCD), specifically mentioning Ted Strauss (now at the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service) and Curtis Harver. The value of the participation of the San Joaquin Valley Air Quality Management District was also noted, including the need to make sure member Sean Ferreria knows about the December biomass panel.

2. Creating the opportunity for more prescribed burns.

- a. Mr. Jones-Yellin described the status of prescribed burning and associated funding, per a handout describing the recent and current fuels budgets.
- b. Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Ballard about the amount spent per acre on burning and the amount of acreage prescribed since 2006, which she further clarified. She noted that the Tehipite Fire was the largest amount of acres burned and was noted on the document with an asterisk. Mr. Thomas added that it would be beneficial to see more funding, and if air quality permitted it, more large scale burns, which would result in greater cost effectiveness. Ms. Ballard added that if these large scale burns were feasible they would only cost \$40 an acre.

- c. Mr. Thomas inquired about the use of managed fire. Ms. Ballard explained that these policies apply to wilderness areas, so would not apply to the Dinkey Landscape unless the Land Management Plan were revised.
 - d. Mr. Mark Smith asked Ms. Ballard about the budget of the past years and the additional fuel funds that were added in 2009. Ms. Ballard explained the chart and pointed out this year the budget has been reduced to \$790,000, which was about 40% less than previous years, which averaged approximately \$1,300,000. Mr. Jones-Yellin suggested that the budget is not yet final, and that the proposed budget may have been reduced because the fuel targets were met very well, and the federal government may want to see if the same results can be accomplished with less funds.
3. Regional conservation strategy for Pacific Fisher
- a. Mosé informed the group that there were no further updates on the fisher strategy question. Mr. Thomas followed up with stating he had more information which is discussed further in the budget (see next).
4. Reviewing the Budget for the CFLR.
- a. Mr. Thomas explained that Forest Service headquarters in Washington, D.C., is taking off 30% of the budget. The facilitator agreed to share his email from the Regional Office with the group. Mr. Thomas is preparing for the trip to Washington D.C. Mr. Thomas mentioned the importance and the priority in displaying the fieldwork's progress.
 - i. **ACTION ITEM: DORIAN – ASAP** Share Craig Thomas' email regarding the Dinkey budget.
 - b. Mr. Thomas relayed news that funding for the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Program was likely to be severely cut, and the two years of post-treatment data would not be able to be sufficiently analyzed scientifically. Mr. Thomas emphasized the importance of the Forest Service's commitment to this project, which was affirmed by the 2004 Framework and by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in California. It was not clear whether this funding applied to all parts of the project, including owls on the American River, or just the first component.
 - c. Mr. Smith commented that there seems to be a disconnection with the fieldwork and the Regional Office. He noted that the Collaborative had requested information on this topic for two months, but not received a response from the Regional Office.
 - d. Mr. Thomas mentioned his letter to the Regional Office, which prompted the formation of a bioregional science synthesis team that combines PSW and the Regional Office. The team will develop a series of papers (aquatic issues, vegetation issues, and all fire issues) in preparation for the upcoming Forest Plan revisions. He continued that PSW and the Region would be more coordinated regarding the future allocation of funds.

3. Debrief of Dinkey North and South Field Visit

Mr. Thomas presented the importance of the field visit to support the Dinkey North and South Monitoring Report. Mr. Thomas felt that the overall outcome is positive. He also emphasized areas where there were concerns on the site and the appropriate adjustments that can be made. These include pine stands, fuel issues, the quality of the fisher rest sites, and encouraging the advancement in collecting information on the characteristics of fisher rest sites.

A. Identification of Potential Fisher Habitat

Mr. Ramiro Rojas explained that there was an effort to identify the quality of fisher rest sites and a judgment call on what happens with the removal of trees on the edge of the clump. Ms. Ballard commented on the high quality of oaks with the potential for den sites, which also brought up the issue of what the structures for a den site. Mr. Rojas suggested narrowing the range of potential den sites characteristics to simplify the markers' task, and noted that without further refinement potential habitat could cover extensive amounts of the landscape. Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that this raised the question of how many rest sites were adequate for an area, and the group noted that this number was exceedingly difficult to determine.

Mr. Smith pointed out that sale administrators need to be trained, yet they lack the time for training. He recommended looking at how the Sugar Pine project accomplished this.

Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Craig Thompson if there could be a synthesis created for the sites, and suggested that photos would aid in identifying potential rest and den site habitat characteristics. Mr. Thompson said that identifying conservative amounts of habitat (e.g., 70th-80th percentile quality) with the support of photo documentation would be helpful. He added that approximating a desired number of sites is difficult because it depends on the reuse of sites, which is a subset of the total available; one is starting to see this in Dinkey. Putting numbers aside, he suggested that the distribution, internal structure (cavity characteristics and diversity of cavities), understory (treatment, boundary, fuels characteristics, etc), and connectivity of sites were equally important considerations. The facilitator noted that the group could attempt to refine key habitat characteristics as part of their 2012 work plan.

B. Monitoring Matrix and Summary Document

Mr. Stan Van Velsor suggested that the monitoring matrix was critical to understanding the impacts of the Dinkey project, and suggested adding standardized questions about fuels and den sites to the matrix. Mr. Rojas responded that Dinkey North and South included a LiDAR component, and a subset of areas could be picked for deeper review through plot level evaluations. He suggested there needs to be more synthesis of the reports, and when this was done would be important. Dinkey North and South identified 4 years after treatment to monitor the effectiveness.

Asked about the summary document provided by Mr. Thomas and Ms. Britting, Mr. Rojas stated the document is a good way to have notes on the field visit, though there is no calculated data involved. Mr. Rojas added that he would be walking and creating new notations

on Dinkey North in spring 2012 and Dinkey South in the fall 2011. In addition, Mr. John Mount stated that he would like to walk the Dinkey N/S sites again, and was generally satisfied with the success of current project outcomes. Mr. Rojas suggested the importance of creating a handy reference guide to provide to the field workers, so they can have a tool in the field for understanding implementation guidelines.

Mr. Thompson reiterated that it would be helpful to provide more guidance on what constitutes high quality or low quality habitat sites. At the large landscape level, the Fisher Rest Site module for the Forest Vegetation Simulator could be used at the stand scale, and provide some direction about higher and lower quality sites, more specific than the 0.4 CBI index.

C. Landing Sites

Mr. Thomas expressed concern about some of the landing sites within the Dinkey N/S project scope. Mr. Larry Duysen affirmed that there were some landings that were two times the average landing size, and explained that this is linked to the operational logistics of conducting log removal and biomass removal at the same time. He suggested the group could help improve the landing sites by examining them during operation.

Mr. Thomas relayed that Ms. Sue Britting had suggested that such landing areas could become targeted restoration areas after the work is complete.

D. Trees Removed by Objection

Mr. Thomas noted that it was questionable whether the trees that had initially been marked for removal but then blacked out (i.e., retained) due to settlement of an objection by Mr. Chad Hanson had provided ecological benefits. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Rich Bagley agreed that retaining the trees on this site did not appear consistent with their approach to managing high density, and if so, this action should inform future planning. Mr. Van Velsor expressed the importance of monitoring with an adaptive management frame to look at the results collected, and decide what needs to be changed for the future.

E. Regeneration Patches

Mr. Thomas expressed he would like to see more regeneration patches on the Dinkey site and to move away from canopy layering, because he only observed regeneration in a few places during the field visit. Mr. Rojas responded to Craig by addressing that Dinkey North had more opportunity for tree regeneration and clumping, but Dinkey South had less clumping on the site. Mr. Smith suggested that Mr. Thompson should participate in such field visits to help the group identify important smaller tree clumps, especially after harvest.

F. Identification of Ladder Fuels and Marking Guidelines

Ms. Ballard noted that in the field, there was an attempt to identify the ladder fuels as part of one of seven categories. This was a challenge because sometimes a stand might look the same visually, but the sizes involved are different. In some areas, large oaks appeared to have a value of fisher, and the whole area might require retention. Bugkills were also widely seen.

Mr. Rojas agreed and suggested that more direction was needed on den and rest sites, treatment of oak clumps, and direction to marking crews. He suggested that identifying structures was less problematic than deciding on the appropriate treatment. He noted that he would share the revised bugkill report with the group when it was available. Mr. Steve Haze added that climate change made deciding what to do with oaks even more of a challenge.

Mr. Thompson added that it was hard to identify what to do with a specific clump of oaks, as cavities themselves have different internal conditions and there are many intangibles. He suggested that aiming for a number was unlikely to be helpful, and it would be wiser to aim to protect well-dispersed, diverse cavities. Mr. Thomas flagged that in some sites there may be competing objectives, with small trees serving as ladder fuels yet also supporting fisher denning and reducing predation. In these areas it would be critical to flag the reasoning behind whatever choice is made, removal or retention.

The group agreed that the draft marking guidelines would require revisions before they could be applied in future planning efforts.

4. Review of Proposed 2012 Work Plan

Mr. Jones-Yellin explained that his goal in the draft 2012 work plan was to focus on a bigger scale and thus eventually increase the scale of implementation activities, which he referred to as the “Big Gulp” approach. After summarizing each of the five phases of the approach, which would result in a NEPA document, he added that different implementation tools would be developed to advance on-the-ground implementation.

Mr. Van Velsor asked how much of the site would be included in the NEPA document. Mr. Jones-Yellin replied that he would like to include the entire landscape – but not every management topic. It was likely that any topic which the group could not agree upon in the near-term would likely eventually be resolved through joint fact-finding and become a smaller supplemental NEPA document. Joint fact-finding would likely include topics like snag creation objectives, characterization of historical fire regimes, bugkill, and fisher habitat protection. Existing NEPA projects would be integrated with the new project. The group would need to work carefully to identify and provide the appropriate level of detail for different components. Mr. Thomas emphasized that the input of different specialists from the Forest would be critical.

Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that such a larger-scale restoration project could provide a longer planning horizon, larger acreage, and thus greater certainty for contractors. Mr. Larry Duysen noted that markets change, meaning that some mechanism is needed for negotiation. He distinguished between timber and stewardship contracts, and suggested the project be based on stewardship guidelines. Stewardship contracts include timber but have a different bidding process, and also involve a detailed proposal and work plan and employment component.

Mr. Van Velsor noted that the Four Forests Restoration Initiative had established a 10-year stewardship contract; Mr. Rojas noted that they brought a contracting officer on board early.

Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that appropriate planning might create a stream of low value, woody biomass trees for a 6-8 year period. Mr. Rojas noted that it was hard to create a market, but it would be beneficial to increase operator efficiency and solve the problem of chip van access.

Members agreed that the “Big Gulp” approach seemed feasible as long as the highest priority areas were noted and assessed.

Mr. Van Velsor noted that with one large NEPA document approach, one can plan for work at a larger scale, but anyone opposed to the work could halt the entire project at that scale. Mr. Jones-Yellin agreed that this was a threat. Mr. Haze suggested that regular communication and engagement with the public would decrease the chance of such opposition.

ACTION ITEM: MOSÉ – ASAP – Initiate Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4 FRI) discussion to learn more about their planning and contracting approach.

AGREEMENT: Members adopted the proposed 2012 work plan, including the landscape-level planning, implementation tools, and joint fact-finding elements.

5. Discuss Draft Monitoring Matrix and Revised Monitoring Coordinator Proposal

Mr. Van Velsor gave a brief overview of the monitoring sub-committee and their future steps. His presentation slides are posted for members on DataBasin.org. Coordination was a critical topic for the committee, and Mr. Van Velsor stated that the group was interested in hiring a part-time monitoring coordinator to organize and compile many different types of data. Stan added that the group has considered contracting out.

Stan reviewed the seven components in creating a monitoring plan, and emphasized the importance of recognizing trigger points for adaptive management. The next steps were to narrow down specific trigger points, and work on the 2012 budget by attempting to bring in supplementary funds.

Mr. Haze suggested coordinating with the East Fresno Resource Conservation District regarding both the socioeconomic monitoring work and communication about the Dinkey Collaborative’s activities.

Questions were opened with Chad inquiring about a few elements in the handout about the consistency of the language and the missing intensity of the fire patches. A few members also asked Stan to elaborate on a few of the topics noted in the handout.

6. Draft Promotional Materials and Discuss Finance Work Group Plans

Mr. Thomas articulated the need to pull together a budget for monitoring, and informed the group about the Forest's submittal of proposals for planning and implementation to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

- Mr. Jones-Yellin explained that the Forest's pre-proposal was geared to the purchase of biomass equipment for Dinkey N/S and potentially other future projects.
- Mr. Thomas stated that the Conservancy was willing to allow funds to go towards fisher restoration, and that the Conservation Biology Institute was also submitting a pre-proposal. The National Forest Foundation also supports citizen-based monitoring, and Mr. Thomas will follow-up.
- Mr. Van Velsor noted the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation had a meadows restoration program that would seek grant applications due April 1, 2012.
- Mr. Haze suggested that the Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council had also submitted two pre-proposals to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and could expand these to include Dinkey work on biomass. The Green Jobs Initiative also was examining biomass.

Mr. Kent Duysen and Mr. Thomas are headed to Washington DC to seek support for the collaborative. Mr. Thomas agreed to distinguish his efforts for the Dinkey effort from other business, and planned to meet with people at the Forest Service headquarters, Senator Feinstein's Office, and the Office of Management and Budget to discuss how much money is available and where is it going. Mr. Thomas will emphasize the importance of the legislative mandate, and convey how it has unified the group through topics such as multiparty monitoring, science, biomass, wildlife habitat, and fire reduction, so it is important to continue funding.

The facilitator stated that he will put together a document noting the Finance Work Group's charge, as well as a simple brochure for their trip.

ACTION ITEM: DORIAN – ASAP – Develop promotional brochure for Finance Work Group trip to Washington, D.C.

7. Review of Annual Report Outline

Mr. Jones-Yellin reviewed a brief outline of the annual report that he had sent in advance to the group, and indicated there will be a large portion dedicated to narrative descriptions. The 2012 approach will be speculative with a section stating the accomplishments could differ from the outline due to the collaborative not being fully engaged in certain areas of the planning, and Mosé said that he will take a neutral writing stance. Attached to the agenda was a small table illustrating the time individuals have spent on the meetings. The document will help to create a

narrative for matching dollars, thus showing a more complete picture of the contributions made by the group. Mr. Jones-Yellin asked members to submit it by November 3.

ACTION ITEM: ALL MEMBERS by November 3 – submit their collaboration hours to Mosé, using the spreadsheet provided.

In response to questions, Mr. Jones-Yellin clarified that (1) time spent in Collaborative meetings does not count toward implementation, and (2) field visits count toward implementation, and the associated travel time and expenses should be included. People should use their hourly billing rate to calculate the total costs.

Work conducted on the Southern California Edison private lands would also be included as these are part of the Dinkey Landscape area.

8. Informational Updates: Snowy Patterson, Soaproot, and Eastfork Project Status and Upcoming Dates

Mr. Jones-Yellin explained that the Eastfork ID team has modeling data for all alternatives, the specialist reports are due November 18, drafting of the Environmental Assessment (EA) report will begin thereafter, with a decision expected in mid-April. Soaproot has been delayed to ensure adequate resources to complete planning for the Eastfork project, and NEPA will continue in 2012. It is likely that a contract will be established at the end of the year, with work being conducted in 2013. Snowy Patterson contractor reports are completed and reviewed, the EA is being edited, and the contracts are being moved forward.

Mr. Thomas asked about Snow Corral meadow, and whether there can be further analysis of lodgepole pine removal in the NEPA document, as this could affect the habitat for the mountain yellow-legged frog. Mr. Jones-Yellin stated it is possible, but the report currently focuses on prescribed treatments for four other meadows. He explained that the four meadows documents did not include the concerns of the frog, but did mention the encroachment of lodgepole pine, and that Ms. Stephanie Barnes would analyze the road and the effects of the equipment on sedimentation. Mr. Rojas suggested that an amendment to the EA could allow for further analysis and refinement. Mr. Thomas suggested that this was a lost opportunity and not a preferred approach. The group agreed to consider additional analysis and an amendment after completing the initial analyses of the four meadows.

9. Action Items

The facilitator introduced a new structure for sorting action items, noting that some items requested earlier were not directly related to planning tasks at hand and would require

significant staff resources. Therefore going forward the group would be asked to help distinguish between low priority action items, or things that the Forest would track but not prioritize, and high priority actions, or things needed for upcoming meetings and work that the Forest would prioritize. The group could move things from one category to another over time, recognizing that limited staff resources will not be able to meet all requests and tradeoffs would have to be made. The group agreed to the following list of action items:

Low priority: informational records regarding hazard tree sales, road maintenance status, grazing allotments, and cabins. Projects with existing NEPA (this would be needed in early 2012).

High priority: Biomass panel questions and invitations. 4FRI discussion. Promotional materials.

10. Attendees

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Elaine Alaniz, USFS | 7. Chad Hanson (by | 11. Ramiro Rojas, USFS |
| 2. Rich Bagley | telephone) | 12. Mark Smith |
| 3. Carolyn Ballard, USFS | 8. Steve Haze | 13. Kim Sorini-Wilson |
| 4. Larry Duysen | 9. Mosé Jones-Yellin, | 14. Craig Thomas |
| 5. Dorian Fougères, CCP | USFS | 15. Craig Thompson, USFS |
| 6. Gabriella Golik, CCP | 10. John Mount | 16. Stan Van Velsor |